



# GIRL AGAINST THE Universe

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## ABOUT THE BOOK

After surviving a horrific accident that takes the lives of her father, brother, and uncle, Maguire starts to feel at odds with the Universe. When bad things continue to happen around her, she feels cursed. But then she meets tennis star Jordy and starts to wonder if her luck is about to change. Will their budding friendship and blossoming romance help Maguire face her fear of hurting other people or will she retreat into herself and remain the girl against the Universe?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Maguire feel that bad things happen to people who are around her? What repetitive behaviors has Maguire developed to help her cope with feeling “cursed”? Do you think these actions really protect her and others from harm? Explain.
2. When Dr. Leed explains to Maguire that “mental health is fluid” and she isn’t seeing him to be “fixed,” what does he mean? What is the purpose of the therapy challenges?
3. Discuss the difference between “Tennis Player Jordy” and “Real Jordy.” What is Jordy trying to figure out about himself with the help of Dr. Leed? How do Jordy’s parents’ expectations for his future cause him conflict? Explain how Penn is the “rebel” in Jordy’s family.
4. How does being “shrink-homework partners” help both Maguire and Jordy? Why does Maguire feel that the Universe has stolen almost everything from her? Why does Jordy feel like the real him is disappearing? What do you think of the therapy challenges and goals that they have each set?
5. How does Maguire feel about her mom remarrying and her new siblings? Has her mom gotten “past everything”? When Maguire’s stepdad, Tom, says, “it’s hard to let yourself be happy,” what does he mean? How are Maguire and Tom’s feelings similar?
6. How is Maguire guilty of “selective attention”? When Jordy tells Maguire her “life is more than just a bunch of unfortunate events jotted down in a notebook,” what does he mean?
7. How does confiding in her new friends, Jade and Penn, make Maguire stronger and more confident? When Jordy tells Maguire that she makes him “want to be brave—to face the stuff that scares me,” why does she turn down his request to be his girlfriend even though she really likes him?
8. When Tom offers to help Maguire reach her challenge goal, what does she begin to realize about her stepdad? What new alliance is formed between them?
9. When Maguire and Jordy go rock climbing, Maguire finds herself thinking only in the moment without a hundred dark thoughts distracting her. Explain why this made her feel like “my entire body has been frozen for years and I’m finally starting to thaw.”
10. Why does facing her fear of roller coasters help Maguire realize that no one can control the Universe—all you can control is yourself?
11. Why does Jordy consider Maguire his good luck charm? Why do you think Jordy comes to the conclusion that “playing tennis is not worth giving up everything”?
12. When Maguire’s mom finds her luck notebook, what does she begin to realize about her daughter? When she tells Maguire that “luck isn’t a zero-sum game,” what does she mean?
13. What does Maguire learn by visiting the scene of the accident where her father, brother, and uncle died? Why does her mother thank her for bringing her there, too? Why do they both leave their necklaces by the roadside memorial started by the firefighters?
14. Explain Maguire’s decision to choose “happiness” over “the absence of guilt” at the end of the novel. Explain what Maguire means when she says, “the only thing scarier than blaming myself for bad outcomes is accepting the fact that sometimes *no one* is to blame”? What risks do you think Maguire might take in the future?

